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Shakespearean Plays and the Development of Modern Communication Skills

Abstract: Being able to communicate effectively is the most important of all life skills. Communication skills play a vital role in our daily life. Throughout your life you can understand why communication skills are important to you. Modern age is the age of communication. In this age of communication, language plays a very vital role in the life of human being because only human being can communicate their ideas and feelings in language. The aim of the present paper is to highlight the importance of Shakespearean plays for developing communication skills. English language, since the Westerners have been trying their best to establish linguistic imperialism, has been considered a global language. Its circulation shows that English language will survive till our civilization would be alive, so it has got an eternal potential in this sense. Similar is the case of William Shakespeare and his use of English language which never goes out of date. Shakespeare's plays continue to have a universal appeal for the sensitive, rich and eloquent use of language, and the memorable array of characters. He is the greatest dramatist of English literature not only for his thematic presentation of life and manner but also for his linguistic skill and communicative language. His unique style of language and choice of word help students to increase vocabulary base. This paper tends to show how we can find samples of excellent use of communication strategies

in the plays of Shakespeare who wrote his plays more than 400 years ago. His works are the property of the whole mankind.

Key Words: Communication, Modern age, Human being, Westerners, Imperialism, Eloquent, Strategies

Communication skills in English consist of listening, speaking, reading and writing. These are four skills of any language. Listening and reading skills are called receptive skills. Speaking and writing are called productive skills. These four skills of language are very important for the development of communication skills. Speaking skill takes priority over other communication skills in any language. To become a master of any language, a person has to know all these skills. Most of us don't feel comfortable while talking with other. That's why many good schools have made it a regular part of their curriculum. Shakespeare's works mix drama, rich language, outrageous situation and low comedy. Shakespeare should be introduced to the young students with a view to grow the utility of the literary works of versatile actor in the minds of the young learners. When young students start to interact with others using the performance based-method, a seed is planted that will be cultivated over many years and their language and literary skills will develop rapidly. We often look to the man of letters to become good communicator.

You can also gain much insight into communicating effectively by heeding the advice of a chap named William Shakespeare, who achieved lasting fame several centuries back as a writer, not a communication guru. Even so, the Bard of Avon wove many observations pertinent to communicating into his tales of high intrigue and low comedy. (Leech3).

The basic principle of communicative approach of language teaching is to use it properly. Application is the fundamental part of any language. Before going to discuss the application of communication it is better to discuss communication skills and its basic functions. It is a learned skill. Though most people are born with the physical ability to talk,

all cannot communicate well unless they make especial efforts to develop and refine these skills further. Utterances are loaded with intentions, which a speaker wants to do with language. Various strategies are used to achieve the target result. It is useless to say that to become successful in this age of globalization we have to devote ourselves for the development of communication skills. In this competitive world the art of communication is an indispensable need. Everyone seeks to excel in order to attain success. It would not an overstatement to say that if someone is not familiar with English language today, s/he is living in an opaque world from where s/he cannot connect with the rest of the world. In this age, soft skills are given much importance. These are not only linguistic skills but also social skills and occupy a prime importance in the management courses. Basically soft skills of communication are learnt from family. But sometimes children are deprived of such valuable skills. Therefore many persons are not good at their soft skill, such as, positive flexible attitude and interpersonal relations. So the need for formal training and grooming of soft skills has come into vogue. Soft skills are something one may have learnt unconsciously from one's family, community and society and through literature. It must be mentioned that English literature teaches soft skills to a great extent. Literature mirrors life. Those who read literature have better perception of life and people. Shakespeare's comedies and tragedies always have universal appeal and serve as a valuable treasure to learn life skills and develop one's personality.

All the characters of Shakespearean plays shine and dazzle us because of their dialogues, statements, wits, and humours. Shakespeare's women characters have caused all kinds of expression that reader may comprehend and imitate to enhance his communication skills. The character of Lady Macbeth in the play *Macbeth* has potential to empower the students, give them many opportunities to have pride in their works; it teaches them responsibility, problem solving, management and directing proficiencies. According to Thomas Leech:

You may or may not be a devotee of the Bard, yet his words will trigger some ‘Aha’s!’ give you a refreshing (and catchy) perspective about many facets of communication, and make you chuckle (I guarantee it) as you add to your knowledge. And that knowledge you get from the proven tips and cautions you will be able to use every day in the workplace (Leech 4).

Lady Macbeth’s stirring speaking style can be followed by corporate leaders and senior officers of any institution. Her strong determination is reflected when she speaks to her husband. Lady Macbeth, informed of the witches’ prophecies through Macbeth’s letter, at once resolves to persuade her husband to attain kingship by murdering Duncan. When Lady comes to know the news of the king’s impending visit to her palace she invokes the spirits to come to her aid:

Come, you spirits

That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here

And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full

Of direst cruelty! (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*. I. v. 41-44. pp. 40-41).

We are filled with the tremendous strength of her will which can reduce even femininity to nought. She advises Macbeth again and again when Macbeth shows sign of weakness, she proceeds to offer him sound advice: “Look like th’ innocent flower, / But be the serpent under ‘t” (I. v. 66-67. p. 41). But he feels tormented by the conscience. He changes his mind and decides not to proceed to the proposed assassination. But it is her art of speaking that defeats Macbeth’s conscience. The initial victory of conscience in Macbeth’s mind is only for short lived. Such dilemmas may be come in our life. Accusing him of cowardice, Lady Macbeth asks him to ‘screw’ his courage ‘to the sticking place’. Her forceful arguments revive his ambition to such an extent that he is forced to avoid conscience. No doubt, Shakespeare’s female characters are more sophisticated, powerful and balanced than male characters. They express their opinions or views in a very calculated and refined way

It is universally acknowledged that Shakespeare is the greatest writer in the history of English literature. He had a great power of language. Shakespeare's art of expressing any feeling is very remarkable. Portia, a character in *The Merchant of Venice* is very expert in expressing her feeling in a perfect manner. She expresses her thoughts in a very logical, inspiring and lucid manner. She takes male disguise. In the court scene Portia takes delight in her male role. Disguise gives her the necessary power to speak up in court. Through speech in the court, she makes proof of her extreme cleverness. She expresses different aspects of the bond between Antonio and Shylock in order to defend the accused. It is her art of communication that helps her to outwit Shylock, the villain of the play. Presenting logical views she definitely beats Shylock's cleverness. The modern lawyers can take materials for developing their logical ability. If we go through the text we find that when she talks to the family members she uses very polite and domestic language but when she talks to the Judge in the court, she uses very grand and analytical language so that it may appeal to the Judge and the other spectators. Her language changes according to the demands of situations. Race, religion, gender, family, marriage, love and betrayal make this play interesting. By discussing Portia's language in the trial scene, the play invites audiences to read her as a representative of the learned renaissance women, placing especial emphasis on the dialectical and rhetorical elements of the language. Through a close reading of the mercantile language in the text, Portia can be interpreted as the merchant of the play. Shakespeare's women are more self-regulating and free to express their true identity.

Shakespeare uses poetic language derived from ordinary everyday speech but it differs from everyday speech. His purpose is not only to communicate facts but also to delight and impress by exploiting the resources of the language. In this context it is pointed out that an excellent communication skills can be developed through an active participation in drama. It helps to improve the ability to think, to act and to perform better both in groups and as an

individual. Participation creates real world and involves ourselves in a specific situation for a while. It is important to communicate to audiences in terms that will mean the most to them, in the language that will be clearest to them. His use of similes, and metaphors appeals the reader. Metaphors are used in all varieties of language and numerous examples can be found in *Twelfth Night*. Viola, the heroine uses a metaphor when she personifies Nature:

‘t is beauty truly blent, whose red and white

Nature’s own sweet and cunning hand laid on

Lady, you are the cruellest she alive

If you will lead these graces to the grave

And leave the world no copy (Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*. I. v. 259-263. p. 20).

Viola is tender and sensitive, witty and resourceful, womanly and enterprising. With her disguise she starts a number of complications. With her patience and charm, broad minded and selfless love, she not only attains her objective but also helps other lovers to meet fulfilment of their passions. She not only leads to the marriage of Olivia and Sebastian but also teaches Olivia and Orsino what true love is. She overcomes over her problems and mixes with other in a calculated way without perplexing. She alone is able to shape the world of happiness. The whole interest of the play turns round Viola. Yet Viola is the greatest tragic character of the play because she suffers most. The greatest amount of sadness is found in Viola and sympathies of the audience automatically are directed towards her. Malvolio is not less interesting. Even today we use Malvolio’s quotation in a round about way: “Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and / Some have greatness trust upon them” (II. v. 159-160. p.43).

The power of speech can be seen in the play *Julius Caesar*. The play shows the power of communication can be used and misused. It can make and destroy a person. The best way of manipulating the people is how you speak with them. After murder, Caesar is painted by Brutus as power hungry leader with the intentions of enslaving all of Rome. It is only the powerful

speech of Antony which sways the people of Rome once again. The crowd mourn for the death of Caesar and ready to kill Brutus, Cassius and other murderers. Thus charismatic leaders gather followers through dint of personality and charm, rather than any form of external power of authority. Calpurnia says to Caesar about her fear after nightmare. When he does not accept her proposal not to go to the senate, she becomes logical. Caesar ignores all the omens and dies.

In *The Tempest* Miranda reflects her strong will and determination in the presentation of words clearly. Her way of communication stimulates the heart of readers and compels them to mimic her sentences deliberately. It is reflected in her speech when she talks about her father:

Why speaks my father so urgently? This

Is the third man that e'er I saw; the first

That e'er I sigh'd for: Pity moves my father

To be inclin'd my way! (Shakespeare, *Tempest*. I. ii. 441-444. p. 22).

In most of the emerging academic circles, Shakespeare is widely read for communicative purposes. So all these female characters may be studied from the point of view of learning communication. His characters are strong and authoritative in their linguistic competence so much that their speeches have become 'touchstones' for the modern aspirants for willing to communicate in English effectively.

Rosalind in the play *As You Like It* is more remembered for her witty and intelligent repartees than her tantalizing beauty. Her heart seems a long-lived stream of affectionate cheerfulness. She can talk to all sorts of characters whether elders or younger, high or low and male or female. In all situations, her dialogues are impressive and effective. In today's perspective her language very well suits to the need of all modern speakers of English. She captures the hearts from generation to generation. The play *As You Like It* is famous for its romantic language. The conversation between Rosalind and Orlando in the forest shows the

real love with modesty and chastity. With her wit Rosalind does not disclose her identity in the forest and applies this wit to cure the crazy soul of Orlando: “And your experience makes you sad; I had rather / have a fool to make me merry than experience to / make me sad; and to travel for it to!” (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*. IV. i. 25-27. p. 84). The language contains the flavour of poetry and sobriety.

Shakespeare shows some very pathetic human dilemmas through his fictional characters. We find the climax of dilemmas in the characters of Hamlet and Macbeth. Sometimes We also feel

such conditions in our own life. The main problem in Hamlet’s character is to delay in executing any work. Hamlet is not a man of action; the only action that he is capable of is impulsive action. His too much thinking and reflectiveness render him incapable of executing action. When he comes to know the secret of Father’s death, Hamlet resolves to avenge the murder of his father. But he fails to take any definite decision. He asks himself whether he should kill himself or he should continue to live and endure the sorrows of life. Hamlet’s most famous soliloquy is: “To be or not to be, that is the question” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. III. i. P. 56.). The soliloquy reflects his mental debate. The words of the characters in this play are like poison and daggers. Hamlet’s deep connection with language and words causes him to base his perceptions of reality on his interpretation and understanding of words. In this play words are the key to both the driving action of the play as well its outcome as all characters have somehow been affected by poisoned words. The reader is offered some degree of foreshadowing when the ghost of Hamlet’s father states that Claudius has poisoned the whole ear of Denmark with his words. Everyone faces loneliness and despair in their life. Hamlet feels isolated. There are many instances where Hamlet feels alone but he cannot share his pain with anyone else. All of these factors not only contribute heavily to his depression but also causes his overall demise. Hamlet talks with Claudius ironically. When Claudius addresses Hamlet as nephew and son,

Hamlet replies that I am something more than your nephew and I am very far from being a son to you so far as my feelings towards you are concerned. He uses bitter language to express true feelings for his mother and Ophelia. We can look at Shakespeare's Hamlet and his use of language as relevant to the modern daily life. The advice which Polonius gives his son while his son Laertes is about to sail away to France. Such suggestions are generally given to us by elders. We use such advice in our daily life. No person can go wrong in life if he or she acts upon the advice of Polonius:

Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar,
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledge courage. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear 't that th' opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear but few thy voice,
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement (Shakespeare, *Hamlet*. I. iii. 59-69.p.20).

Again we can quote a moral advice of Polonius:

Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandary (I. iii. 75-77. p. 21).

In Shakespeare we find a fine blending of characters both male and female. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood, they speak like men and women not like authors. He has

created about twelve hundred characters. His characters come from different sections of society. They are kings, courtiers, prophets, priests, clowns, beggars and rustics. He understood his characters so deeply and presented them so vividly that for many readers they have become more real than some of the living men and women. It is universally acknowledged that Shakespeare through his fictional characters, touches upon almost every aspect of human behaviour. He described human nature as it is and as it was and will be. It is said that Hamlet, Falstaff and King Lear seem far more real than historical characters like Thomas Jefferson and Napoleon. We find his knowledge on various subjects- music, law, science, law, art, politics, history, psychology and wandering. His characters are not only individuals but also representatives. Lawyers, sailors, historians, musicians and psychologists find that Shakespeare must have firsthand experience about those subjects. Yet as far as his life is known, it shows no professional experience in any field other than the theatre.

In the play *Othello* Shakespeare uses very impressive, poetic and sentimental language. We notice the poetic language of Othello even in the murder scene of the play. It is known that metaphor plays a vital role in language. To be sentimental and passionate is no doubt good but too much poetic is not suitable for an ideal person. This is what we come to learn from the various sentimental speeches of Othello. Iago is not less poetic than Othello. Iago tries to convince Roderigo through different types techniques and appeals. He convinces Roderigo not to suicide and to go to Desdemona. Iago uses prose and verse to convince and manipulate person around him. Iago's speech makes confuse and impress :

For when my outward action doth demonstrate

The native act and figure of my heart

In complement extern, 'tis not long after

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve

For daws to peck at; I am not what I am (Shakespeare, *Othello*. I. i. 61-65. p 3).

It is not clear what Iago means as he does not make it specific. It seems as if it is a sudden warning to Roderigo that Iago is a type of man that just cannot be trusted. Desdemona's remarkable dialogues can't be forgotten. The language of Desdemona for second language learner can provide an opportunity to develop the imagination of the students. Creative dialogues of Desdemona will offer exercises in critical thinking and the chance for the students to be creative. Desdemona has strength of communication. She knows how to argue with the right words effectively with her father about her engagement. She is an ideal figure of virtue. She stretches her helping hand to Cassio's requests to help him acquire back his post. Iago poisons Othello while Desdemona talks much about Cassio. She takes the blame from Othello for her death and her love continues even to the point of death. It must be noted that because of lack of communication skill, many characters suffer in Shakespearean plays. For example, Othello fails to use proper skill to know about Desdemona's supposed affair from Iago. If Othello had good communication skill, he would have asked Desdemona and Cassio directly about their affair and he was able to know that Iago had no proof of their affairs. Both Othello and Iago have problems with communication in marriage. No doubt Iago is better communicator than Desdemona and Cordelia.

The dialogues of the heroes, heroines, kings, queens and dukes in the plays of Shakespeare are not only used by the students of English literature but also by persons in management sections. According to A.C. Bradley: "For with Shakespeare soliloquy generally gives information regarding the secret springs as well as the outward course of the plot; and, moreover, it is a curious point of technique with him that the soliloquies of his villains sometimes read almost like explanations offered to the audience" (Shakespeare, *Shakespearean Tragedy* 222). Dialogues offer a great opportunity for pair work. Performance of drama is one of the major tools for language development. Role play is a part of drama activity:

Role play is very important in teaching speaking because it gives students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social context and in different social roles. In addition, it also allows students to be creative and to put themselves in another person's place for while. The role play is an ideal activity in which students could use their English creativity and as it aims to stimulate a conversation situation in which students find an opportunity to practice and develop their communication skill (Tiwari and Dodiya 99).

Shakespeare's plays cover many topics, such as love, violence, race, tragedy which we face in our daily life and watch in movies or T.V. shows. There are so many instances of powerful components of communicative skill prevalent in his dialogues. It would be interesting to see how motivational experts are using situations and dialogues from Shakespeare to deal with corporate management. During the trial of Antonio powerful dialogues are spoken by Shylock, Antonio, Bassanio, Gnatiano and Portia. It is clarified that Shakespeare's dialogues know no geographical boundaries and are spread to the people despite ethnic and geographical differences.

Many advanced institutions draw lessons from the theatre to enhance students' ability to become powerful leaders. Great leaders are always good communicators. Communication skills have been assumed immense importance today and become all the more important. It is important to develop a variety of skills for both communicating to others and learning how to interpret the message received from others. In this context we can say that rhetoric is a good weapon of speaking. Rhetoric is very important to the leaders and politicians. By rhetoric they explore issues related to the present social problem. No doubt Shakespeare is a master of rhetoric. Falstaff uses rhetoric and shows the skills of a brilliant speaker. King Richard, Iago and Cassius seduce other characters through the use of rhetoric. Nowadays political leaders follow Shakespearean characters. Shakespeare's plays are replete with powerful examples of how inspiring leaders can lead their teams towards achieving the impossible. First meetings in

all places are very important. Shakespeare's many protagonists' motivational speech inspires us.

The function of a motivational opening is to gain attention and arouse motivation at the start of an interactive sequence. It cannot always be assumed . . . are less than enthusiastic about taking part in the ensuing experience. Therefore, it is vitally . . . participants so that the particular task involved may proceed as smoothly as possible therefore. Otherwise the main objectives of the interaction may be different to achieve. (Hargie 182)

The most memorable example of this is the brilliant speech delivered by King Henry V in the battlefield of Agincourt where he rallies his tired troops against the larger skilled French army. Agincourt Speech is seen as one of the most powerful motivational speech in the history. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus is not as good orator as Antony who wins the crowd over by his powerful speech. Every boss should read and imbibe stirring address.

Shakespeare is called "man of words". He introduces nearly 3,000 words in English language. He has great contribution to the introduction of new words and phrases. He has invented, borrowed or adopted words and phrases from classical languages. Sometimes he changes verb into adjectives or nouns and vice versa, adds suffixes and prefixes and combines one word with another word. Literary there are thousands of words and phrases he coined are part of our daily usage. Shakespeare is credited by both *Oxford English Dictionary* and *A Dictionary of the English Language*. Students should receive Shakespeare's works in small doses throughout their academic course at school level. The idea of introducing Shakespeare early is not just for advanced students, but a valuable learning experience available to all students. The earlier the students are engaged with his work, the more confident they will become each time they read him. Abridged version of the plays may be introduced at the primary level.

So, as a conclusion, it is hoped that the study of plays of the Shakespeare will certainly assist to develop communication skills. Extraordinary facility for language and medley of characters are some of the striking qualities of his plays that make us want read and re-read them. Studies of Shakespearean plays greatly develop communication skills, increase vocabulary bases, and can be so well related to our own time and lives that students can bond with Shakespeare's characters and use their outcomes to make their own decisions and life choices. He is very much relevant to the students. He is the most quoted writer in the world after various writers in the Bible. It has already been noted that Shakespeare has made many contributions to English literature and the one that affects us every day is his contribution to the English language. Such a great contributions to the English language are reason enough to keep his works in classroom studies. We can use his plays as strategies in various programme for developing communication skills.

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